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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 003235

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV LE FR

SUBJECT: LEBANON: FRENCH VIEWS ON POLITICAL SITUATION

FOLLOWING AOUN'S RETURN

REF: A. PARIS 3053

1B. PARIS 2944

Classified By: CDA: Alejandro D. Wolff for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) MFA Political Director Stanislas de Laboulaye provided Charge with French views on the situation in Lebanon during a May 11 meeting on NATO's role in Darfur (septel). Laboulaye reaffirmed that the GoF would have preferred that General Aoun had stayed in Paris, and that FM Barnier had urged him to do so during their meeting in Paris April 29 (ref B). Aoun, he said, had a large ego and many of the people around him were mediocre. Aoun's return, he continued, was making the Christians uneasy.

12. (C) Laboulaye said that not all the Syrians were out of Lebanon, and agreed that Syria is not in compliance with UNSCR 1559. One of the problems, he said was that the Syria-Lebanon border was not well-defined. It was important for UNSYG Envoy Terje Roed-Larsen to know where the Syrians were hiding.

13. (C) Laboulaye offered that a pleasant surprise had been that PM Mikati was "not so bad." Despite (or because of) being close to Syria, Mikati knew what the process was about, and his leadership could be the best solution for now and Mikati could also be useful in the future. By contrast, Laboulaye continued, former PM Hariri's son S'ad was a political novice.

14. (C) Laboulaye said that following the elections, Lahoud would be weaker. He envisioned that Lebanon's May 29 elections would take place in accordance with the 2000 electoral law, notwithstanding that it was imposed by Syria. The ideal solution, according to Laboulaye, would have been for Lebanon to use the 2000 law while allowing for smaller districts in central Lebanon.

WOLFF